

Remarks to the Community in Dover, New Hampshire January 11, 2001

Thank you all so much. Governor, thank you very much for being here and for your leadership and your friendship. And I agree, that 4 more years sounded good to me, too—for you.

I want to thank my good friend Ron Machos and his wonderful wife, Rhonda, and my buddy Ronnie and his brothers for being here—don't cry, Ronnie; I'm just not going to be President; I'm still going to be around—[laughter]—for being to me the symbol of what my efforts in 1992 were all about.

I want to thank the mayor for welcoming me to Dover and giving me the key to the city. I told him—he said, “You don't have to carry this if it's too bulky.” He gave me a little ribbon. I said, “I might wear it around my neck.” [Laughter]

I want to thank the Green Wave Band. Weren't they great? [Applause] I thought they were terrific, and they did a great job.

On the way in, George Maglaras was reminding me of all the times I've been to Dover, and he said, “Now, when you get up here, you're going to have my mother and my first grade teacher.” I met her in the bingo center in Dover in 1992. [Laughter] And I would say, ma'am, I've aged a lot more than you have in the last 8 years. [Laughter]

I can't tell you what a great trip this is. Some of my friends in New Hampshire actually came up here from Washington with me, and a lot of the—all the people who worked in the campaign wanted to come. Nick Baldick is here. Of course, he's practically been here since I left. And David Neslin came with me, who worked in that campaign.

And every day for 8 years, by the way, every single day I have been reminded of New Hampshire because I had in my private office off the Oval Office a painting done by my friend Cindy Sexton Lewis—she and her husband, John, helped me so much—of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, right before the primary, with David Neslin and me. We're walking across the street together. And Cindy gave me the painting, but right before I was inaugurated. Because it was 10 days before the primary and everybody said I was dead as a doornail—[laughter]—and she said, “I looked at your expression in the paper,

and you had your fist clenched and your jaw clenched, and I thought you would win anyway. So I painted this, and I decided I would wait, and if you won I would give it to you.” [Laughter] So I thought that was a pretty good reminder. And all the tough days I'd go back and look at that picture, and I would remind myself of why I ran for President and what we were doing.

It was a tough time 8 years ago for our country when I came here. You've just heard a little bit about it. It was also a fairly tough time for me. I was taking a whipping in the press, and I was dropping in the polls. But I said then, and I would like to say again, that was nothing compared to the punishment that the people of this State and this Nation were enduring. As I said to—you heard Ron talking about it.

I remember walking down Elm Street in Manchester with now-Judge Broderick. I'm glad I'm not here on a political trip so you can come to my meetings for a change. It's nice to see you, John; Patty, thank you. Half the stores were vacant. Nobody could find a job. I remember a man in Merrimack who told me he had lost his job 30 days—30 days—before his pension vested. I remember a little girl telling me that she could hardly bear to go to dinner anymore, when I was in a high school in Manchester, because her father had lost his job, and he wept at the dinner table because he felt he had let his family down.

These and so many other New Hampshire stories became the lifeblood of my campaign. Across America, 10 million of our fellow citizens were out of work; most with jobs were working harder for less; interest rates were high. The Government deficit was \$290 billion a year and rising. Our debt had quadrupled in the previous 12 years. There was a crushing burden on our economy and on our kids.

We were also in trouble as a society. Welfare rolls, crime, drug abuse, teen pregnancy, income inequality—all of these things were rising. And some people said they didn't think we could do anything about it, but I didn't believe that for a minute, because as I traveled around this State, as I traveled around my own home State

where I had been Governor for a dozen years, I went across this country, I saw a lot of determination and hope, good people with good ideas for solving problems. I knew the American people could turn the country around if we had some good ideas and we acted on them. That means—to me, that meant that we had to have, first, a Government that was on the side of the people, that put the American people first, changed to meet the challenges of a new era.

And so I set out, as Governor Shaheen said, 9 years ago in New Hampshire with this simple conviction, that the American people were hungry for ideas and sick of the politics of personal destruction and paralysis.

I put out this little book, which I bet some of you still have copies of, called the “Plan for America’s Future.” And people made fun of me. They said, “What’s this guy doing running for President with all this—look at this single-spaced type. Who’s going to read that stuff?” And we went to Keene one night, early in the primary, and the people helping me up there said, “Now look, here’s the way New Hampshire works. If we get 50 people at this town meeting”—I was running fifth in the polls here, by the way, at the time—“if we get 50 people at this town meeting, you won’t be embarrassed. They won’t write in the newspaper that you’re an abject failure.” [Laughter] “If we get 150, it will be a triumph.” Four hundred people showed up, when I was running fifth in the polls, and they had—the fire marshal wouldn’t let them all in. And I said, “Holy Moses, something’s going on here. It turns out people really do care.”

And I remember talking to Hillary and saying, “You know, we actually have a chance here.” When 400 people showed up in Keene, I knew we had a chance. [Laughter] And by the way, my wife said to tell you hello and thank you. And when you really need it, you might have a third United States Senator now.

So, we were getting toward the end of the primary, and I came to Dover. And as I was reminded on the way in, we were at the Elks Club, I think. There were tons of people there; the place was packed. And I didn’t have any notes, and all the experts said I was dead. But I said what we really needed was to think about what we were going to do as a people, that we needed a new Government, less bureaucratic but more active, a new kind of politics that treated issues not as a way of dividing people but as a way of solving problems together; a

new set of commonsense ideas for the economy, for education, for crime, for welfare, for the environment, tied together by a simple philosophy: opportunity for every responsible American.

I said, “You know, if you elected me President, we might not solve all the problems, but at least you would know if you supported me, when you got up in the morning, you wouldn’t have to worry about whether your President cared if your business is failing, if you were losing your home, if you couldn’t get an education for your kids.” And I promised in that now-famous line that I would work my heart out for you until the last dog dies. After 8 years, and with almost exactly 9 days to go, the last dog is still barking.

I’ve worked hard for 8 years to make good on the commitments I made to you. Here in Dover, the unemployment rate then was nearly 8 percent; today, it is 1.7 percent. Across the Nation, the unemployment rate has dropped from 7½ percent to 4 percent, the lowest in 40 years. We have the longest economic expansion in history, the lowest female unemployment rate in 40 years, the lowest Hispanic- and African-American unemployment rate ever recorded, the highest homeownership in history.

We’ve gone from record deficits to record surpluses. At the end of this budget year, which is the last one for which I am responsible, we will have paid off over \$500 billion of the national debt. Since 1993, after inflation, the yearly income of the typical family is up \$6,300, hourly wages up by more than 9 percent. This economy has created—I’m proud to say—yes, more billionaires and more millionaires, but unlike some previous recoveries, this rising tide has lifted all boats. All income groups have had their income increase, and in the last 3 years the biggest percentage increase has come in the 20 percent of our workers that are earning the lowest wages. We are moving forward together.

But I want to talk today about some of the other issues, too, because one of the things that really touched me in New Hampshire was that people were not just interested in the economy, as miserable as it was. People cared about health care here. They cared about the environment. They cared about education. They cared about crime policy. They cared about welfare policy.

In the closing weeks of my administration, I’ve been trying to give a few speeches recapping where we were, how we’ve gotten where

we are, and where I hope we will go. I went to the University of Nebraska at Kearney, the only State I had not visited as President. I told them, just because they never voted for me didn't mean they weren't better off, and I thought I ought to come and say I was glad. [Laughter] And I talked about the world challenges we faced, the foreign policy challenges.

I was in Chicago talking about the education record and where I hope we'll go there. And so I want to try to talk about these social issues today, where we're going as a people, because we're not just better off; we're a stronger, more united country. Crime is down; welfare down nearly 60 percent; teen pregnancy is the lowest rate it's been in decades; we are growing more diverse, but we're also growing more united.

And so I came here one last time as President to New Hampshire to thank you for making me the Comeback Kid but more, and far more important, to thank you for making America the Comeback Country. Through all the ups and downs of the last 8 years, I never forgot the lesson I learned from you here in those amazing weeks in the winter of 1991 and 1992: What's important is not who is up or down in Washington; what's important is who is up or down in Dover.

So let's talk a little bit about that booklet I had and what it's meant. We abandoned a lot of the false choices that had paralyzed Washington: You had to be liberal or conservative; you had to be left or right; you had to be this or that. And we replaced them with a new set of ideas that have now come to be called the Third Way, because they've been embraced not just here in America but increasingly all across the world by people who were trying to break out of outmoded political and economic and social arrangements to deal with the real challenges of the 21st century.

Let's just go through a few of them. Number one, in the past, people believed you either had to cut the deficit or increase investment, but nobody thought you could do it at the same time. I thought that was a false choice. I thought we had to do both if we were going to move forward as a nation, which meant we had to get rid of a lot of inessential spending, eliminate a lot of Government programs that weren't necessary anymore, get the deficit down. And we even asked the people who had been most fortunate in the 1980's to pay more taxes, but we

promised to use it to get their interest rates down, and we said they'd be better off.

So we cut the deficit, and we got lower interest rates. That meant more business investment, lower home mortgage rates, lower car loans, lower college loans. It meant more jobs, higher incomes, and a rising stock market. At the same time, we doubled our investment—more than doubled our investment in education and increased our commitments in health care, the environment, research and technology, the things that are necessary to build the capacity of America for this new age and all these young people who are in this audience.

On welfare, in the past, all the debate was our compassionate obligation to help the poor, on the one hand, or other people saying, "No, everybody ought to just go to work." We thought that was a false choice. And we replaced yesterday's welfare system with one in which work is both required of those who can work but rewarded and one in which the children are not punished for the challenges facing the parents.

So we cut the welfare rolls by 60 percent nationwide. Millions of people have moved from welfare to work. We insisted, however, that if people are required to work, they should have job training and child care and transportation and that the parents should not lose their children's rights, if they're low income workers, to Medicaid and to food support, so that you can succeed at home and at work, even if you're a poor worker. I think that's very, very important.

And we raised the minimum wage, and we doubled the earned-income tax credit. That earned-income tax credit goes to the lowest earning workers in our society, especially those with children, because I don't believe anybody who works 40 hours a week ought to raise a kid in poverty. I don't think that's right. If somebody's out there doing what they're supposed to do, they ought to do that.

Now, what is the result? We have the lowest poverty rate we've had in 20 years, and last year we had the biggest drop in child poverty in 34 years. This is working. You can reward work.

We also tried to do some important things in health care. We made sure people with disabilities could go to work without losing their health care coverage. We provided coverage in Medicare for screenings for breast and prostate

cancer. We provided health care coverage for women with breast cancer or cervical cancer. We did dramatic things in diabetes research and health care coverage and sped the delivery of drugs to people who needed it, with HIV and AIDS, which has changed the entire landscape from 1992 in the length and quality of life.

And we made sure that people who lose their jobs or who switch jobs can do so without losing their health insurance. And we limited the ability of people to be dropped for preexisting conditions. We created the Children's Health Insurance Program, which has enabled States to insure the children of lower income working families, so that now 3.3 million more kids have health insurance. And for the first time in a dozen years, the number of people without health insurance is going down in America.

Now, I remember at these town meetings we've talked a lot about crime. And I had been attorney general of my State and Governor, and I spent a lot of time on this. And one thing a politician knows, running for office, you will never get in trouble as long as you sound like you're the toughest person on the block about crime.

So nobody has to think. You just say, "Somebody commits a crime—put them in jail and throw the key away." But if you look at the facts where crime is going up and crime is going down, it is more complicated. Yes, serious offenders should be punished and punished severely. But it was clear that we had to do more to change the environment.

We had had a tripling of violent crime in America in the previous 30 years, the number of police on the beat had only gone up by 10 percent. And so, we said, "We need to do more to put more police on the beat. We need to do more to help keep kids off the street and out of trouble. We need to do more with commonsense measures to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children. And we can do that without interfering with the legitimate rights of hunters and sportsmen." And that's exactly what we did.

We put 100,000-plus—we're now to about 130,000 police on the street. We passed a lot of measures to keep kids out of trouble and give them positive things to do. Six hundred thousand people who were felons, fugitives, or stalkers were not able to get handguns because of the Brady law. And notwithstanding all the recent election-season rhetoric, not a single

hunter missed an hour in the deer woods, not a single sports person missed a sporting event, but we have the lowest crime rate in 25 years.

One of the things that really impressed me about being in New Hampshire in '92 and late '91 was, as terrible as the economy was, there were still people who cared passionately about the environment and who understood the beauty that you have been graced with in this gorgeous State and who did not believe that we had to sacrifice a clean environment for a strong economy. But that was the prevailing view, not only in America but in a lot of the world, that you couldn't have—if you wanted to continue to have economic growth, you just had to put up with a certain amount of environmental degradation. It just was inevitable.

But the truth is, in the new economy of the 21st century, which is based more on ideas and information and technology than on using more energy in ways that are destructive to the environment, that is not true anymore. So what do we do? We had new standards to clean the air, and the air is cleaner. The water is cleaner; the drinking water is safer. We've cleaned up more toxic waste dumps, twice as many in our 8 years as in the previous 12 years.

We've set aside more land than any administration since Theodore Roosevelt. It includes not only the big, famous places like protecting Yellowstone, the California redwoods, the Florida Everglades, the great roadless tracks of our national forests, but green spaces in communities all across America. And it turned out it worked. It hasn't hurt the economy one bit, and we should do more of it, not less.

Now, in education, the debate in the past was, I thought, a horribly false choice: raise standards or spend money. The people that wanted to raise standards said, if you just throw more money into the education system, it won't improve the schools. People that wanted to spend more money said, if you raise standards without spending more money, you're just going to punish innocent children. I thought to myself, having spent enormous amounts of time in schools, that that was the nuttiest debate I ever heard. *[Laughter]*

So we said, look, here's a simple strategy based on what principals, teachers, and parents say; based on the fact that we had schools, even then, all across America, including in New Hampshire, that were succeeding against enormous odds; that we needed a strategy which

said, higher standards, more accountability, more investment, and equal opportunity. And we set about doing that.

I asked Dick Riley, the Governor of South Carolina, who had a superb record in education, to be the Education Secretary. He is the longest serving and the finest one in our history, I believe. And here's what happened.

In 1992 there were only 14 States that had core academic standards for what all kids should learn. Today, there are 49. We more than doubled our investment in schools. We've expanded and improved Head Start. The last budget had the biggest Head Start increase in history. We're now providing Federal support for the very first time for summer school and after-school programs. This year, we'll cover 1.3 million children. We've helped schools across America to hire 37,000 new teachers to lower class size in the early grades, well on our way to meeting our goal of 100,000 new teachers, which will give us an average class size of 18 throughout America up to grade three.

This year, for the very first time, we got Federal support—since World War II, the very first time since right after World War II, when my generation was in school, the baby boomers—we got Federal support to help to repair the most severely distressed schools, over a billion dollars. It's a huge problem. We've got schools that are so old and so overcrowded, they literally—I've been in school buildings where all the power went out when they tried to hook up to the Internet. They literally can't do it.

The Vice President supervised a program that—we did an event in a school here in New Hampshire to highlight this—to try to hook up all of our schools and classrooms to the Internet. In 1994, when we started, 3 percent of the classrooms and 35 percent of the schools had an Internet connection. Then we passed the Telecommunications Act of 1996 that had the E-rate, to make sure that even the poorest schools could afford to hook up. We got the private sector involved. Today, 2000, we've gone from 3 percent of the classrooms to 65 percent, from 35 percent of the schools to 95 percent of the schools connected to the Internet. And SAT scores are at a 30-year high, in no small measure because there's been a 50 percent increase in the number of kids taking advanced placement courses.

We've got more people than ever going on to college, thanks in large measure to the big-

gest increase in college aid since the GI bill passed 50 years ago. We passed the HOPE scholarship tax credit to make the first 2 years of college affordable to all Americans. We passed a lifetime tax credit for junior-senior years, for adults going back to school, for graduate schools—13 million American families are taking advantage of this. We raised the maximum Pell grant. It will be about \$3,700, a little more actually, this year. And with the Direct Student Loan Program, we cut the cost of college loans by \$9 billion over the last 7 years to our students. It's worth about a \$1,300 savings on every \$10,000 a student borrows to go to college. We've opened the doors of college to all Americans, and I'm very proud of that, and I think you should be.

In the past, there was this big debate about the cities. Some people thought if we just poured a lot more money into the cities, we could solve all those problems. Other people thought they were a lost cause, and more money wouldn't help. I thought both sides were wrong. So what we said is, we need to drive crime out, empower people to take responsibility for their own lives, and get more private sector investment in, because we know that Government programs alone can't do the job.

So we brought in more money through the Vice President's empowerment zone program, through community development banks, through strengthening a law called the Community Reinvestment Act, which had been on the books for over 20 years but had never really been enforced. Over 95 percent of the investment by private banks in poor areas in America has occurred since we've been in office. And it's worked. It's paid off. Bank profits are up. There are jobs up. Businesses are up.

That street in Manchester I mentioned, where half the storefronts were vacant in 1993, is filled with businesses today, from banks to Internet cafes. And that kind of turnaround is going on all over the country. Poverty in the inner cities down 23 percent since 1993. And late last year our bipartisan new markets initiative passed, which will get even more money into the inner cities, into small rural communities, into Native American reservations across America that have been left out and left behind by this recovery.

Now, one other thing I would like to mention, because in some ways it's the most important of all to me in this whole litany of social issues, is embodied by Ron Machos up there talking

about his family. In the past, every time there was an initiative to make a workplace more family-friendly, to do more child care, to pass family leave legislation and things like that, the other side said, "Well, we would like to do that. That seems like a very nice thing, but it would be too burdensome to the business economy, and so we can't." But one thing I learned, traveling here and then going across the country, is that I hardly met any people who were working and had children, even people with very good incomes, who hadn't had experiences in their work life where they felt they were letting their kids down. I hardly met anybody who hadn't had moments of tension where they were afraid that they couldn't do right by their kids or by their job; they were having to choose. And it seemed to me to be a terrible dilemma, not only for families but for the society, because the most important work of any society is raising children.

Anybody who has ever had kids can tell you that if things aren't going right for your kids, it doesn't matter what else is going right in your life. You know, it just doesn't. It doesn't matter how much money you've got. It doesn't matter—nothing else matters.

And so we set about trying to change that. I am very proud of the fact the first bill I signed as President was the family and medical leave law. It had previously been rejected. It had previously been rejected on the grounds that it was a perfectly nice idea, but if we gave some people time off from work when their kids were sick or their babies were born or the parents were sick, it would be so burdensome to the economy. Well, 22.5 million jobs later, 35 million people have taken advantage of the family and medical leave law. We have to be pro-work and pro-family.

The work we've done in child care, all this work has been good for America. The last point I want to make is this. When I spoke here in Dover back in '92, I said that throughout our country's history we've always gotten in trouble when we were divided, and when we were united, there was nothing we couldn't do; that we were becoming a much more diverse country—racially, religiously. I was in a school in Chicago a couple of days ago where half the—the grade school—half the student body was Asian, 18 percent African-American, 17½ percent Hispanic. The rest were white ethnics, almost all of them Croatian-Americans. And that's the future toward which we're moving.

And I said I would do what I could to build one America, to have us not tolerate each other but celebrate our differences. Life's more interesting when you can argue around a coffee table or in a school or at a civic club or something, about your differences, and celebrate them, but you know that you are bound together by shared values and common humanity and that those things are more fundamental.

One of the things I always tell people is that when it comes to anything that's social, whether it's your family, your school, your community, your business, or your country, winning is a team sport. It's like basketball. You can take—Michael Jordan may be the greatest basketball player that ever lived, but if he'd gone out alone against five guys, he'd have lost every game.

And this is a team sport. And I'm so glad these young people from City Year are back here, because the embodiment to me—I first visited City Year in Boston in 1991, and it became the basis for my proposal for national service, for the creation of AmeriCorps, which is the embodiment of my idea of one America. AmeriCorps, since we established it in '93 and it came into effect in '94, has given 150,000 young people a chance to serve in communities all across this country and earn a little money for college. In 6 years, more people have served in AmeriCorps than served in the Peace Corps in the first 30 years of its existence. We are building one America together.

That's my report to you. The stuff that was in this little book people made fun of me about is now real in the lives of the American people. The ideas have taken hold, and America is at the top of its game. And I just hope that we will continue the progress and prosperity of the last 8 years.

If we continue our policy of fiscal responsibility and investing in our people, we can keep the prosperity going and be debt-free for the first time since 1835, when Andrew Jackson was President. If we continue to put more police on the street, keep guns out of the hands of criminals, and give our kids something to say yes to as well as something to say no to, we can make this country the safest big nation on Earth.

If we continue to support important environmental initiatives and a strong economy, we can meet the challenge of climate change and any other thing that comes down the pike. If we continue to add people to the rolls of health

insurance—and we ought to start by including the parents of all the kids we’re insuring with the Children’s Health Insurance Program, and the Federal Government has the money to help the States do that now—we can achieve that cherished goal that we talked so much about in New Hampshire in 1992 in providing health insurance to all American families.

If we keep investing more in our schools and demanding more from them, we can make sure every child gets a 21st century education. If we continue to require work, reward work, and support working families, we can expand the circle of prosperity and still strengthen the fabric of our society. We’ve got 8 years of evidence to know that these ideas were good for America, and this direction is the right path.

The American people chose a vital, common-sense center 8 years ago. It seemed very foreign back then to Washington. I can remember political writers who spent the previous umpty-ump years in Washington saying, “I don’t know what this guy believes. Does he believe anything? I mean, you’ve either got to be a conservative or a liberal. You can’t be for—I mean you know, you’ve got to be in these little boxes we’ve been thinking in all these years in Washington.” And they were so good for America, these little boxes, right? *[Laughter]*

Guess what? That’s now the new consensus in Washington. People now believe that this is the right direction. It’s even basically the landscape against whence the last election was fought in such a close fashion. There is a consensus that we have to find ways to continue to change, consistent with our basic values and our common community and humanity.

Now, as you look ahead, let me just say, because conflict is always more interesting than consensus, I expect most of the press coverage will continue to be about the politics and the division. But let’s just look at what happened last year in Congress, an election year for Congress and for the Presidency that was very closely fought in the Senate, the House, and for the White House.

Last year, while all this was going on—and you’d have thought nobody ever agreed on anything—here’s what happened. We had the biggest and best education budget in history. We passed for the very first time in history a lands legacy initiative to give a stable source of fund-

ing to continue to set aside public lands, from big tracts to local green spaces—never happened before. We lifted the earnings limit on Social Security. We provided health care coverage for people suffering from breast and cervical cancer that couldn’t get it elsewhere. We passed this new markets initiative, which is the biggest thing we’ve ever done, to try to get private investment into poor areas. We had truly historic trade agreements with Africa, the Caribbean nations—our neighbors—with China, with Vietnam, and one with Jordan which has groundbreaking language that I’ve always wanted in all our trade agreement to include basic labor and environmental standards. And we passed something that I think is profoundly important, that everybody from the Pope to international entertainers have asked us to pass—a debt relief package for the poorest nations in the world that they can get but only if they invest 100 percent of the money in education, health care, and economic development for their people.

Now, that’s what happened last year when everybody told you how divided we were. There is a new consensus here in this country for moving forward. And I just want to ask you—you’re going to continue to be first in the Nation. You’re going to continue to be, in some ways, the guardians of America’s politics. Don’t you ever forget that in the end, our future is tied to people, that it’s more about ideas than a tax. The New Hampshire town meetings proved that in ’92, and New Hampshire’s success these last 8 years proved that.

Thank you for lifting me up in 1992. Thank you for voting for me and Al Gore in 1992 and in 1996. Thank you. And don’t forget, even though I won’t be President, I’ll always be with you until the last dog dies.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. in the gymnasium at Dover High School. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire; Ron Machos, Jr., father of three who in 1991 was jobless and without health insurance for his family; Mr. Machos’ wife, Rhonda, and son Ronnie; Mayor Wil Boc and former Mayor George Maglaras of Dover; Nick Baldick, who headed Vice President Gore’s New Hampshire campaign; and New Hampshire State Supreme Court Justice John Broderick and his wife, Patty.